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# DISCOURSE ON ART.

BY

HORACE P. BIDDLE.

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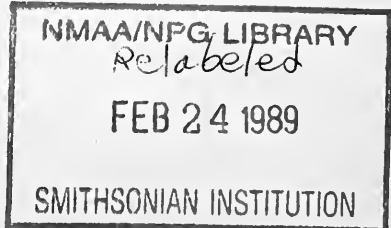
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## A DISCOURSE ON ART.

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ART, in its most general sense, is the proper adaptation of the things in nature to the wants of mankind. The arts are founded on philosophy, and directed by science; and are divided into the Useful and the Fine. The useful arts are confined to the works of the hand without any special exercise of the understanding or culture of the taste, and have for their object the improvement of man's physical condition. Their bases are found solely in the wants of the body. They embrace agriculture, the mechanic arts, and the work of artisans; and can not be enumerated without mentioning almost every pursuit of man. They originated very early in the history of our race—for its very existence depended upon them—and gradually advanced throughout the various nations to the present time. Within this century, however, their progress has been exceedingly rapid. The faculty of mind which discovers and produces the useful arts is invention. This power seizes upon the things in the material world, and adapts them to man's advantage.

The fine arts may be defined to be the various adaptations of the beautiful in nature to the pleasures of man. They are divided into architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry. They are under the direction of the mind and heart, rather

than the hand, and have for their object the elevation of our common nature. Each rests upon its particular science, except poetry, which is above all science. Their origin can not be traced; it is deeply hidden in the past. Architecture may have been copied from the mountain and the cavern and the natural pillar; the repose of the human figure in death would suggest sculpture; light and shade, and the tints of flowers, or the rainbow, would soon lead to painting. The origin of music has been attributed to various sources—the moving of waters, the whistling of the winds, the songs of birds, and even to the murmur of the reeds on the banks of the Nile, and to the ringing of the hammers of Tubal Cain. Poetry springs from the soul, transcends science, and soars above matter. It is purely ideal. Different nations, and even individuals, have claimed the invention of fine arts as their own, but their claims have not been allowed. They belong to humanity. As they are based on the love of the beautiful implanted in our nature, their origin must have been almost coeval with mankind; and doubtless many attempts were made to realize them in their different forms long before they took position as distinct arts. The love of the beautiful is innate in man. The child is attracted by beautiful things long before it attains any knowledge of the useful. So in the infancy of nations, the rudiments of the fine arts are found in their earliest history. The soul soon sees the images it loves, and the hand endeavors to embody them forth. The faculty of the mind which creates, understands, and appreciates the fine arts, is the imagination. As invention is the founder of the useful arts, so im-

agination is the creator of the fine arts. These powers of the mind resemble one another; indeed, invention is but a part of imagination, the distinguishing difference between them being the fancy. Though fancy and imagination are often confounded together, yet they are different. The fancy is that faculty of the mind by which we see things as they exist only in their brightest and most beautiful light; but it has no power to reconstruct them into new forms or combinations. The imagination is that power of the mind which constructs; it takes whatever the fancy selects as bright and beautiful in nature, and forms them into images, pictures, poems. Fancy chooses the material, imagination builds the structure. Thus, invention and fancy form the imagination; it is a double power, not a single faculty. Invention without fancy deals with the useful, but with fancy it forms the imagination, and leads up to the beautiful. The fine arts, then, are based on the beautiful, and are created by the imagination.

What is beauty, or the beautiful? The definition of beauty has engaged the attention of philosophers ever since the commencement of letters. The earliest speculations on record are by Plato; and although it is difficult to digest a system on this subject from his dialogues, yet he laid down the true foundation—namely, that beauty exists in *mind* and not in *matter*. There have been many hypotheses suggested since his day, yet none have been able to overthrow this fundamental idea. Xenophon treats of the subject, but offers no system; and the writings of Cicero abound with thoughts showing a just sense and a fine appreciation of the beautiful. Shaftsbury at-

tributes the perception of the beautiful to an internal sense; this is a similar view to Plato's. Addison has treated of the subject ingeniously in several numbers of the *Spectator*. Burke's singular and absurd theory that beauty consists merely in the relaxation of the muscular fiber, was demolished by a single line from Jeffrey, by simply directing its votaries to a warm bath. Next to Plato, the most ingenious speculations on this subject are by Diderot. He declared that beauty did not depend upon any inherent quality in the objects themselves, but upon their power of exciting certain sentiments in the mind. Thus far he was correct, but he ultimately ruined his theory, by declaring that beauty depended merely upon *relation*. The theory of Sir Joshua Reynolds was that beauty consists in *mediocrity*, or conformity to that which is most usual. Surely this can not be true, for it would rob beauty of all its beauty—namely, its excellence and superiority. Mr. Alison attributed beauty to *association*, which very much resembles Diderot's theory of *relation*. The sense of beauty will doubtless be touched by pleasing associations, but if there is nothing intrinsic in beauty, why should some associations be pleasing and others not? If beauty consists *merely* in association, then we may say that deformity consists in the same thing, for association is alike capable of awakening the sense of either. Indeed, every faculty of the mind may be united to some other faculty, or dis severed from it, by association. Dugald Stewart appears to take a more correct view of the powers of association as connected with beauty, by saying that it often *suggests* the beautiful; but he

does not venture to build a theory on so narrow a foundation as that asserted by Mr. Alison.

Because beauty is variable—one of its greatest attributes being variety—there have been those claiming to be philosophers who have denied its existence altogether. Because an emotion of the soul can not be defined simply, and fixed as permanent as a cube or sphere, its existence is therefore denied. As well may we deny the existence of the soul itself. Prominent among this negative school stands Voltaire. He says: “Ask a toad what is beautiful, and he will tell you, two round eyes, a big mouth, and a yellow throat. Ask a Hottentot: Beauty to him is a black skin, thick lips, and a flat nose. Ask the devil; he will say, a pair of horns, four claws, and a tail. Inquire of the philosophers, and they will answer you with jargon.” But his opinions upon this subject are scarcely worth serious attention. He was a great genius, but quite too fond of denying everything that was beautiful or good.

Beauty, or the Beautiful, can not be defined in terms; neither can the sensation of sight, hearing, or touch: yet who shall say we can not see, hear, or feel? Beauty is a sense of the soul, and whatever is capable of touching that sense is beautiful. The means of exciting this perception are almost as various as the things in nature, yet the *sense* itself is forever the same. Creation abounds with beautiful objects; the flower, the rill, the bird, the gem, the plain, the mountain, the sea, the cataract, and the crowning work of God—the sky—are continually awakening the sense of the beautiful in man. The Supreme Being has surrounded us with the means of

happiness and pleasure; His goodness is ever to be adored. His creation is an eternal monument of beauty. Man selects from this vast domain the things which are most beautiful to him, and combines them into art, and by that means opens new avenues to the soul. The fine arts are the legitimate mode by which our aspirations for the beautiful find embodiment. Nor are we left to material means alone to reach the sense of the beautiful; many of the spiritual qualities have the same effect. There is a beauty in courage, fortitude, heroism. Architecture, sculpture, and painting appeal to the external senses; music and poetry to the spiritual nature of man; but all reach the soul: and amidst all this variety of means, throughout the natural creation, the embodiment of the arts, and our spiritual nature, by which the sense of the beautiful is touched, the sense remains the same. The far-off mountain, the flight of a bird, a thrill of harmony, the distant sea, a little child, a brilliant gem, a lovely flower, the rising sun, the vast dome of the sky—these to the external senses have no resemblance, yet how often they touch the same chord in the breast! A happy moment, a fine thought, a sweet memory, a fond hope, a thrill of love—how different, yet how much they resemble; for they all appeal to the sense of the beautiful—some through our external senses, and others through our spiritual nature; yet all reach the same place, and touch the same feeling in the soul.

It is objected to this theory, which attributes the appreciation of the beautiful to a faculty of the soul, that it gives to man a sixth sense. That we do so see the beautiful is a fact established by experience,

and if it can not be accounted for but by imagining a sixth sense, it would ill become philosophy to deny the fact. But this is not the true answer to the objection. If it requires a sixth sense to see the beautiful, it would require still many more senses to account for all the phenomena of the human mind. The body has its senses, so has the soul; and it no more requires an additional sense of the body to see beauty, than it would to see deformity, or to discover the difference between good and evil. Another objection made to this view is, that this internal sense, as it is called, is variable, and therefore can not be true. The sense itself is not variable; the variety exists, as has been remarked, in the means by which it may be excited. It is true that all objects of beauty do not affect all persons alike; neither do objects of any other kind: but this is rather in particulars than in the general. While many persons would disagree about the beauty of a particular natural object—as a flower, a mountain, a landscape, a cloud, or some peculiar view of the sky—yet all persons agree at once as to the beauty of the works of nature. So of any particular work of art, as an edifice, a statue, picture, piece of music, or poem; persons may differ as to their individual excellence, but all may agree upon some other work, and that architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry are beautiful arts. A mere difference of opinion about the objects of beauty can not render the existence of beauty itself, nor the sense by which we perceive it, uncertain. The sense of the beautiful is no more variable than any other principle in human nature, and while individuals are produced in endless variety,

human nature remains the same; so, while works of art, in all its divisions, vary continually, the love of art, and the sense of the beautiful, are constant and universal.

Having shown the basis of the fine arts to be the beautiful, which is perceived by the sense of the soul so deeply implanted in our nature, we will proceed to briefly notice them separately; and first of architecture, which may be defined the beautiful in the forms of inorganic matter. Although men built houses, doubtless, of some sort, at a very early date, to shelter themselves from the inclemency of the weather, yet it is not likely that architecture had any existence as an art until a much later period, and it is highly probable that the first efforts of the kind grew out of the devotional feelings of mankind. The tower of Babel must be attributed to this source, however misdirected the feeling might have been. The pyramids of Egypt the same; and throughout India, Greece, Italy, Gaul, Britain, and the Americas, the ruins of structures connected with the worship of Deity and heroism, of a very early date, still remain. From these to the more modern churches and temples, as man became more enlightened, the transition is very plain and easy. Our monuments at Bunker Hill, Baltimore, Washington, and other places, are abiding witnesses of our devotion to courage and patriotism. Throughout the Assyrian and Persian empires there are no remains worthy of the name of architecture; and the Jews, not being an abiding people, left but few monuments of this noble art. The destruction of Jerusalem was so complete, that its style of architecture is left wholly to conjec-



ture. It has been contended, however, that architecture took its rise from Solomon's temple, and that in that may be found the regular orders which were afterward attributed to Greece. The bright mind and the quick heart of the Greek brought architecture to a high degree of perfection; yet, strange to say, the Greeks were ignorant of the arch—that important tie which afterward gave strength and grandeur to Roman structures. Doubtless the Greeks were acquainted with the form of the arch, for the bow in the clouds, or the segment of a circle, suggests it; but its use was unknown to them, or at least was never applied. It does not appear that the Egyptians ever brought architecture to a high degree of excellence. Their structures were massive but ungraceful. They looked upon mere weight as strength—which is a great error in any structure—and upon mere magnitude as grandeur. Their pyramids and temples are monuments of misdirected power. Unlike that of the Egyptians, grace, simplicity, and harmony formed the pervading spirit of Grecian architecture. The Romans, though they erected many noble edifices, were but the copyists of the Greeks. They added to the original, however, an effeminacy of detail, such as carving and figuring every architrave, molding, and cap, which, by the strict rules of good taste, can not be regarded as improvements. In some of their structures for practical uses, as their arches and aqueducts, they excelled the Greeks. Modern Italian architecture has still further departed from the purity and grace of the Greek, and has outstripped even Rome in fantastic ornament; but modern nations can not be said to have any national architecture. It

is but a mixture of the Greek and Roman; indeed, there can be no such thing as modern architecture, for the field has been occupied, and the subject exhausted. All that is good in modern architecture is strictly referable to the Greek and Roman.

The styles of architecture are generally divided into five orders—the Doric, Tuscan, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite; but these orders blend, and are not essential to the nature of the art, any more than the division into epic, dramatic, lyric, pastoral, and elegiac are essential to poetry. There are strictly but three orders, however. The Tuscan can scarcely be distinguished from the Doric. The Composite is a mixture of the Corinthian and Ionian, to the confusion and injury of both. The Doric, Corinthian, and Ionic were all known and used in Greece, and must ever be regarded as the highest and truest expression of architectural art. Nothing has since been added to their excellence; and indeed it would be almost as difficult to conceive a new order in architecture as it would be to invent a new form for the circle or the square. Yet we have the modern Gothic order, which was supposed to have originated with the Goths; but this notion can not be maintained. The Goths destroyed; they did not build. The Gothic order of architecture was introduced, or invented, in England, about the middle of the twelfth century. It is not admitted into the classic orders; yet, as it is so well known in modern styles, it should be added to the number. Indeed, it has become quite a favorite order. There is a fanciful story that it was suggested by the crossing branches of trees in a thick forest, as the Corinthian order was supposed to have

been by sitting a basket in a bed of flowers; but there is nothing of the kind authentic.

The elements of beauty which enter into architecture are simplicity and harmony; simplicity in the general structure, and harmony in all its parts. Grandeur is the great effect to be attained, and without simplicity it can not be done.

Architecture in this—that it has no prototype in nature—differs from sculpture and painting. It deals wholly with inorganic shapes, and has a scope of invention greater than that of sculpture or painting, which are bound by prototypes; but less than that of poetry and music, which are bound by nothing material. Poetry can build castles in the air, which architecture can not do, and music is purely ideal.

Sculpture, which is the representation of the beautiful in organic forms, next presents itself for our consideration. It is the most circumscribed of all the arts, being confined to the *form of organic* objects, but within its scope it is the most excellent. It can not deal with passion, and, being denied color, it is limited in expression. Repose is its chief beauty. It is also limited in its grouping, as well as in its subjects. A sculptured landscape, as a work of art, is an impossible thing. The antiquity of this art is as remote as that of architecture, and, like that, it lies imbedded in our devotional feelings. Indeed, the love of the beautiful and the adoration of the Supreme Being are feelings which lie close together in the human breast. Though sculpture, in its wider sense, has been associated with idolatry, it can not be said that it is much indebted to that misdirected feeling for its advancement. The religion of Persia pro-

hibited the representation of the human form, and in Egypt this art was very much shackled by a similar superstition. The same feeling prevails among the North American Indians. But in all rude nations, and in the earliest history of nations more polite, we find a strong disposition to carve out birds, beasts, monsters, and the figures of the gods they worship; yet almost uniformly coupled with a dread of representing the human face and figure. Notwithstanding these discouragements, however, the Egyptians attained some excellence in sculpture. They also labored under some other disadvantages. It appears that their personal figures and countenances were not the best models for sculpture; besides, by their laws, invention of every kind was prohibited. Such figures as they did produce were stiff and unnatural. All their works tended more to magnitude than excellence; they were more learned than artistic. The Phœnicians were more beautiful in person, and possessed a higher taste, but still they were apt to cover their statues with meretricious ornament. This partly grew out of their commercial character, by which they obtained gold and gems from other regions. The Etrurians cultivated this art to a high degree of excellence—so much so, indeed, that some of their works have been taken for Greek productions. They excel in the statues of their gods. But it was reserved for the Greeks to bring this art to perfection, as it was that of architecture. The climate of Greece was calculated to develop everything that is noble in human nature. The sense of the beautiful was livelier in the Greeks than in any other people that ever lived. They had their ideal standard

of beauty, gathered from all that is beautiful in the human form in its best development. The age of Pericles, Phidias, Socrates, Plato, and Xenophon was an epoch of genius. Phidias ornamented the temple of Jupiter. Praxiteles lived later, and was not less excellent. He combined softness and force, voluptuousness and modesty, purity and passion, so sweetly that the most insensible were touched, and the most sensitive not alarmed. The form of the celebrated Venus was stolen from Praxiteles. The Elgin marbles—there were by Phidias, however,—taken from the temple of Minerva, now in the British Museum, are a group of figures representing every form and position of the human figure. They will form studies for all future time.

The Romans were too much engaged in war, and were too ambitious, to admire the repose of art. They did nothing in sculpture worthy of their fame. Finding the Greek works so beautiful, they contented themselves with collecting and copying them. Sculpture degenerated in their hands, as did also architecture. They, however, produced some good statues of their great men, but did not excel in ideal art. Modern Italy, however, revived sculpture, and it is now cultivated there to a higher degree than in any other nation. England, France, Germany, Spain, and America possess artists of great eminence, but no modern nation can be said to possess any sculpture of its own. Whatever the nation or the subject, if the sculpture is good, it will be Grecian. Powers' Greek Slave is as completely Grecian as though it had been the work of Phidias or Praxiteles; and although America has very little good sculpture,

this specimen must be regarded as one of the very finest in art, ancient or modern. It is indeed a study. There she stands, the picture of innocence; her modesty outraged; the victim of wrong, clothed in her own purity, grieving in stone! Yet in that sweet but sad expression, we see a touching appeal to Justice and a firm reliance on Eternal Right.

Painting, which represents the beautiful with color, will claim our attention next. No nation has ever been found that had not the rudiments of this art in its earliest period. Indeed, form, light, shade, and color exist everywhere, and to copy these is to paint. It is not surprising, therefore, that painting in some rude way, if it consisted in nothing more than marking out objects by lines, following the shadows they cast upon the plain, would exist very early in the history of man. There is a romantic story told of a young girl who traced the shadows of her lover's face upon the wall as he sat in silence contemplating their separation; and this, it has been said, was the origin of painting. The walls of Babylon were found covered with representations of natural objects, animals, hunting scenes, and combats. Painting existed in Egypt eighteen or nineteen hundred years before the Christian era, and, indeed, it had then attained nearly the highest point of Egyptian skill; but it afterward fell under the control of the priests, and degenerated, so that, in the time of the Ptolemies, the wisest period in Egypt, it was confined principally to hieroglyphics, and representations of their monstrous and absurd gods. The arts have ever followed the same track—from the East to Egypt, and into Greece; thence to Rome, and ultimately into Europe generally;

thence to America. They have ever been found in the wake of science and civilization. Light first broke from the East, flowed into Egypt, through Greece and Rome, and down to the present period. There were no families of nations then, giving light to one another, as we find them in modern times. One succeeded the other, and appeared to rise upon its ruins.

The Greeks were worshipers of the beautiful; it was a part of their religion. The artist imagined that in proportion as he succeeded in representing beauty, he received the blessings of the gods. Beauty bore off the prizes at their games. Beautiful children were blessed, and the Lacedamonian ladies ornamented their bedrooms with a view of obtaining the prize. Art could but prosper in such a climate as Greece, and with such a people so devoted to beauty. Their artists were philosophers, and their philosophers were artists. Socrates declared the artists to be the only wise men. Their pursuits, amusements, wisdom, and even wars, were devoted to the beautiful.

Painting run the same course in Rome as did sculpture. It was transplanted from Greece, and degenerated at once. In the most learned and polite age of Rome, Augustus tried to retrieve the arts, but in vain. The spirit had gone from the earth for a time. The Romans not only degraded art, but they degraded artists, holding them as slaves. The walls of Herculaneum and Pompeii displayed scenes which put even Babylon to the blush. But if this art died in ancient Rome, it was reserved for modern Italy to revive it in all its splendor. Italy in painting has surpassed all nations, ancient and

modern. All modern nations, indeed, have surpassed the ancients in this art, for it must be remembered that painting in oil—the only mode by which the highest excellence can be attained—was not known till after Greece and Rome had passed away. I am aware that the use of oil in painting was not unknown to the Romans, Greeks, and even Egyptians, but oil painting was not practiced in art before the fifteenth century. The Florentine school, which was founded by Leonardo da Vinci, and followed by Michael Angelo, is one of the most celebrated. The characteristics of this school are grandeur, dignity, and spirit. The Venetian school is celebrated for its fascination in coloring. The Venetian artist will seize upon the most beautiful and brilliant scene in nature, and make it still more beautiful and brilliant with his pencil. Titian is the grand master of this department.

The modern Roman school has attained great excellence, particularly in accuracy of drawing, and general correctness; so much so, indeed, that critics have sometimes thought that it weakened the vigor and tamed the beauty of their efforts. Majesty and bold effect appear to be the object of this school, treating mere coloring as a secondary consideration. The Bolognese school was founded on the principles of eclecticism. This idea is generally captivating in all the arts and sciences—especially to the uninitiated—but it treads closely upon the empirical, and its unsettled practice is too apt to destroy all principle. Corregio and Guido may be mentioned as eminent in this department. The Dutch and Flemish schools are celebrated for representing nature in her common



garb, and for not choosing the highest subjects of art, but often, indeed, portraying the lowest scenes. In this department, however, they have excelled, and produced some of the most life-like and surprising effects. But the English Hogarth has excelled even the masters of these schools in the striking force and intense effects of his pictures. But Hogarth was not well received by contemporaneous artists. They thought him ill-bred and scantily educated, which was doubtless true, yet in his own department he has never been equaled. It is true that he never choose the highest subjects of art, but his mode of treatment made ample amends for this deficiency, and art could almost better spare her greatest master than her Hogarth. He also engraved his own pictures. His Distressed Poet and Enraged Musician are perfectly inimitable; and his Rake's Progress and Marriage a la Mode contain in themselves the history of human nature. A number of his most characteristic pictures, however, have ceased to be produced, on account of the more fastidious taste of later times.\* But England, France, and America can not be said to have schools of painting of their own, although they have produced eminent masters in all the departments; indeed, this may be the reason why they have not established any exclusive school, and perhaps it is as well, for any peculiar

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\* The celebrated Kit-Cat Club may be mentioned here. This club was composed not wholly of artists, but eminent men in various departments of learning, having for its ostensible object the encouragement of art and literature, but really for the secret purpose of opposing the arbitrary measures of James II. Sir Godfrey Kneller was one of its founders and leaders, and painted the portraits of all the members on canvas of particular dimensions, ever since known as the Kit-Cat size.

school can have no other effect than to narrow the field of art. Germany has founded a late school, having a great tenacity for the elementary principles of the art—characteristic of the German mind; but it is thought by some that this leads to too much stiffness, and excludes that easy flowing grace which is the very sweetness of a picture. In England, Sir Joshua Reynolds, notwithstanding his exploded theory that beauty consisted in mediocrity, attained great eminence as a painter. Although he painted many historical pieces, yet he particularly excelled in portraits. Sir Thomas Lawrence was also eminent in the same department, and perhaps scarcely inferior to Reynolds. But I can not stop to name even half of the eminent English artists. America has had her West, though appropriated by England—he was not unlike Reynolds—her Copley, Peale, Stuart, Trumbull, Dunlap, Melborne, Alston, Cole, second to none in their several departments; and now has many eminent living artists, whom I may not name. But I have said that America, as France and England, has no peculiar school of painting. Rome is the Parnassus to which all modern artists make their pilgrimage; the Helicon, with its ever flowing Hippocrene, from which they derive their inspiration.

Music, which represents the beautiful in sound,—the next subject for our consideration, as an art,—is extremely ancient, but the science upon which it rests is of modern date. The origin of this art, as we have seen, is attributed to many ingenious, but most likely fabulous sources. Throughout Jewish history, both sacred and profane, we find frequent mention of music, both vocal and instrumental. Music

in a rude state must have been coeval with man. The first utterances of joy were doubtless musical. They were not arranged in a set piece, certainly, but they were in accordance with some of the intervals of the musical scale. Indeed, any one who is curious upon the subject will be able to detect musical intervals in the glad shouts of noisy boys in the street. Music is woven in man's nature, as are the elements of all the arts, and is discoverable in his earliest history. Plato tells us that music was taught to the youth of Egypt. He is corroborated by Strabo. The art of the musician was hereditary, and the songs were regulated by law. Amongst the musical instruments mentioned in Egyptian history are the lyre, the flute, and the drum. The Ptolemies encouraged music, and some of them were performers. The father of Cleopatra took the name of *Auletus*, which means a player on the flute. This art continued to be practiced throughout the period of Egypt, but, for want of some mode of writing it, no example has been preserved to modern times.

In treating of Grecian music, we must be careful not to misunderstand the meaning of the term as used by the Greeks. They included not only music proper, but poetry, eloquence, and even grammar—in fact, all the polite accomplishments—under the name of music. The word comes from the Muses, and embraces, in its Greek meaning, everything that was taught by the patronage of the Muses. As much as the Greeks talked of music, it can not be said that they had any, in the sense in which we understand the term in modern art. This arose, doubtless, from the fact that they had not discovered the

science on which it rests, and without which the art can never rise to any eminence. They had a variety of instruments, but none of them were constructed on scientific principles; they were mere experiments, made without a guide. The Grecian harp was an improvement on the Jewish, but it had only seven strings, and its scale is not known at this day. They had no mode of writing music, and we are therefore not able to form any idea of its style. Homer mentions several musical instruments in the Iliad, and the paintings of that period give us their forms, but, unfortunately, we can not discover upon what scale they were constructed. Plato describes a young musician turning the pegs of his instrument, which would indicate that they raised or lowered the tone by tightening or loosening the string, the mode practiced at the present day on all stringed instruments. Pericles patronized music, as it was thought to be a necessary part of education. Not to understand it, indeed, at that period, and not to play on some instrument, would have been regarded as a great lack in accomplishments. With the downfall of Greece, music also fell. Its echo found its way to Rome, but the Romans never brought the art to as high a cultivation as the Greeks. In the polite age of Augustus, even, music was not encouraged. Tiberius banished the musicians from the city; Caligula recalled them, and Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Music and the other arts fell with Rome; and, notwithstanding the high civilization which had preceded, mankind sank to degradation and slavery. The arts were lost, liberty was lost, all that ennobles man was lost; superstition, with her vicegerents, held her reign. Dur-

ing five hundred years the human race were denied the liberty of mind, of conscience, and of limb. With the revival of learning, hope broke again upon the world, and from that hour mankind have been gradually asserting and gaining their rights before God. With the revival of learning, Italy revived the arts, and to her we are indebted for the highest culture in music. It is a singular fact that the tones of an instrument are better in Italy than they are from the same instrument, or from the human voice, in any other region. This is doubtless owing to the greater purity and weight of the atmospheric column in that country. The atmosphere is the medium of sound, and the higher the column and greater its weight, the more perfect will be the musical tone. To Guido, in the eleventh century, is generally attributed the invention of musical notes, and the stave upon which they are written, similar to those used at the present time. This was a great step in the advancement of music. It is now written in a universal language, understood alike by all nations. The world is thus indebted to Italy for its music. Germany, however, caught up the strain, and bids fair to equal her instructor, if, indeed, she has not already done so. In no country is music so generally cultivated as in Germany. It is taught to every pupil, even in her gratuitous schools. Her composers stand in the highest rank, and in Beethoven she has produced the greatest musical genius that ever lived. In France, music is highly appreciated, and has its professors of great eminence; but I am not aware that she ever produced a composer of the first class. She copies from Italy, as the whole world

has done. England is even behind France in original and native composers. Though music has been cultivated at every period of her history, she has not attained any remarkable excellence in the art. Henry VIII. was said to have been a composer, and the reign of Elizabeth was celebrated for the cultivation of music. It became almost extinct in the time of Cromwell. After the restoration, however, it was again revived; but England, like France, has generally brought her music and professors from Italy and Germany. Although music, as an art, has not flourished so highly in England, yet, as a science, the musical scale has there received profound investigation; and England has furnished the best historian of the art. America, as yet, has no music of her own. She has not produced a single composer of high rank, nor an artist of the first excellence. This is not surprising, however, considering her national youth, especially if we cast our eye to England and France. But, within the last forty years, music in this country has made rapid advances. Instrumental music throughout the world, within that time, has received wonderful aid by the invention and improvement of musical instruments. Fifty years ago there was not a perfect musical instrument in the world, except the violin and its kindred family; nor was there then a single master of this instrument. Paganini was the first, and, in some respects, the greatest. In purity of taste and thoroughly artistic performance, none have excelled Ole Bull. The theory by which these celebrated artists produced such surprising effects was before known to scientific musicians, but its accomplishment in practice had been thought to be

beyond reach; and, indeed, the theoretic musician still sees in the violin a perfection which has not yet been attained. It has taken three centuries to bring this wonderful instrument to its present practical excellence, and, as perfect as it is, after three centuries more shall have elapsed, there will still be room for further practical improvement—so wonderful is the capacity of this instrument! The Saxons, Danes, Welsh, and Norwegians were very fond of music, and held the harp in high estimation. In Wales, a gentleman's harp was not liable to be seized for debt, because the want of it would degrade him from his rank. This beautiful instrument is the oldest on record, and figuratively stands for music itself.

The Chinese have a system of music peculiar to themselves. Their scale is supposed to resemble that of the early Greeks, or the more modern Scottish scale, but what the Greek scale was is left to conjecture. It is said that the intervals in the Chinese scale are arbitrary; so Dr. Burney thinks, and, as far as I know, it is so laid down by modern writers; but this is a mistake. The interval of the first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth, in the Chinese scale, counting from the key-note, ascending, correspond with the same intervals in the true diatonic scale. It has a third, however, arbitrarily placed about half-way between the second and the fourth, and a seventh placed in a similar manner between the sixth and eighth. This third corresponds neither with the major nor minor third, nor does the seventh correspond with the flat or sharp seventh in the true scale. The North American Indians have a scale similar to that of the Chinese. Any one who understands the sub-

ject, and will listen to their rough groaning chants, or will examine their rude flutes, will be convinced of the fact. But it is incorrect to talk of an arbitrary scale that will produce music. The musical scale is as fixed as the laws which govern the planets; and it were as absurd in science to talk of an arbitrary scale in music as of an arbitrary law in gravitation. The Chinese, however, are poor musicians. They have no knowledge of harmony, and neither their music nor their instruments are worthy of the least attention in art or science. It is a curious problem—music being so natural to man—that a nation as old as the Chinese has made no further advancement in this pleasing art. It must be accounted for by the fact that they have no knowledge of the science upon which it is based.

But music, in its highest aims, is the most exclusive of all the arts. There are fewer master composers than masters in any other art. Indeed, there never was but one Beethoven. And no artist ever has, or ever can, reach the full capacity of the art. It would be to exhaust infinity. It may sound strange to say that music exists in *mind*, and not in *sound*; but there is nothing in science or art more true. Many can enjoy music to the eye as well as to the ear, as we may read mentally without uttering a word. Beethoven, after he became deaf, composed and played admirably; and he would sometimes fairly go into ecstasies over the score without an instrument near him. And the science upon which music rests is more occult, and understood by a fewer number, than any other branch of learning. Many may tell you glibly that the steps in the musical scale obey



certain laws, and are placed at certain intervals, and that the tones in the concords stand in the relation of 1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 4, 4 to 5, and 5 to 6, and show their ratios of vibration; but this is not as much as the alphabet of the learning connected with the subject. It embraces mathematics in all its branches—numbers, quantities, relations; all the regular geometrical figures, and all aliquot ratios; indeed, the law which governs the musical scale pervades the universe as far as the finite mind can reach and grasp the knowledge. Yet, up to a certain degree, everybody understands and appreciates music; but this is only the sensuous effect of the sound, not the mental perception of the subject; and between such and those who have entered the *arcanum* there is no communication. It requires profound and patient study to understand the science of music, and patient, long, and loving practice to attain excellence in the art; yet these hard terms do not deny our common nature its enjoyment in simple melodies and harmonious sounds. They do not rob the milkmaid of her voice, the peasant of his pipes, nor the minstrel of his harp. We can enjoy the sky without being astronomers, love the flowers and not understand botany, and praise God, though we are not sages.

Poetry will now claim our attention. It is the representation of the beautiful in thought. The elements of poetry are abroad throughout the universe, and are continually moving the soul. Everything grand and terrible, everything soft and pleasing, everything true and pure, everything sweet and delicate, everything bright and beautiful, contains the spirit

of poetry. Man, surrounded with the objects of creation, must have early felt the poetic influence. It is a favorite theory with critics, indeed, that poetry preceded prose; but if they mean to say that poems preceded prose compositions, it seems to me they must be mistaken. A poem presents to the mind a finished image, and it can not be that the first efforts of the human faculties resulted in such a production. Language, doubtless, first broke forth in bold metaphor and striking similes, highly poetical, but any production worthy the name of a poem must have been of a later age. It may be that excessive refinement tames the spirit of poetry, but it needs something better than the untutored yearnings of the struggling soul to give it shape.

The poetry of the Hebrews is the oldest on record. Its characteristics are boldness and grandeur; its spirit is highly lyrical, though it has not the form of the classic ode. In fervent feeling and majestic thought, no poetry has equaled it. To the modern mind it seems abrupt and unconnected, and clothed in a profusion of imagery; but it must be admitted that if it has not the rounded form and polished finish of the classic models, it has more fervency and force. To the Hebrew, leading his pastoral life, the creation was new, and his images would naturally be bold. His poetry, therefore, would be like the gem fresh from the mine, which might be improved by art, but would necessarily lose in the process some of its weight and substance. The Hebrew mind was necessarily formed under the peculiar dispensation to which that favored people were subject, while the Greek mind was molded by mythology, which deified

material beauty; and the effect of these causes are plainly seen in their poetry. Hebrew poetry is spiritual and subjective; Greek poetry is artistic and objective. The former is based on the internal emotions of the soul; the latter appeals to the soul through the external senses; and in this difference the Hebrew must have the preference even over the Greek. Homer is always given as the earliest exponent of Greek poetry, yet bards lived and sang before the days of Homer. His great poem, the Iliad, has been so much noticed that I will pass it by with this single remark, that, like all epics, it is rather studied by the few than read by the many. Greek lyrical poetry possessed great fire and spirit, and attained a high excellence; but it must be admitted that it smacked too much of Venus and the vine. The fire of Sappho's love would never be acknowledged by a modern lady, nor would the bacchanalian spirit of Anacreon be excused in a modern gentleman. Pindar reached a purer excellence, but he was too artificial; and his devotion to splendor and power will forever deny him mastery over the universal heart.

The tragic drama was brought to perfection by Æschylus, soon after which Alexander conquered Greece, and poetry passed away. Pastoral poetry afterwards, however, attained to excellence under the hands of Theocritus, but the spirit of Greece had departed never to return. During the first five centuries of Rome she had no poetry. Indeed, Rome copied her poetry from Greece, as she did her architecture and sculpture. Virgil is the Homer of Rome, and Catullus the Anacreon. There never was but one Sappho. The torch of poetry was stricken down

by the fall of the Roman empire, and smoldered in the ruins of the dark ages for many centuries. Its returning light was first seen in Dante. Then came Petrarch. The former represented the grand; the latter the amatory. Ariosto blended the two. Tasso copied Homer and Virgil. He was also as devoted a lover as Petrarch, but fixed his affections on a more legitimate object. Spanish poetry is a mixture of the Latin and the Eastern. The romantic chronicle of the Cid is the great Spanish epic. In Spain, ballad poetry is rich and romantic. Villégas was the Anacreon and Catullus of Spain, and the last poet of true spirit she has produced. French poetry began in chivalric romance. Besides her dramas, which are of the highest order, France has no poetry of the first excellence. She has nothing worthy to be called an epic, the *Henriade* having been denied that high position. Her lyric poetry is artificial and empty. Beranger, however, has brought that branch of the art to great excellence. His muse possesses fire and also finish—a rare combination; but I fear that it is too much colored by the times in which he wrote, and partakes too much of the political spirit, to ever become classical. The present French poets have shown fine genius. The early poetry of Germany was heroic. Then came the minne-singers, which were bands of minstrels similar to the troubadours. They sang of love. Then came the meister-singers, who sang less of love and more of morals. After the time of these wandering bards, there was a period of more than two hundred years, during which Germany produced not a single poet. Indeed, it was reserved for Klopstock, in the last century, to reawaken

her Muse. He was a true German, and taught his countrymen the powers of their own genius. Wieland possessed fine powers, but he was as much a Frenchman as he was a German. Göthe and Schiller were the greatest poets Germany ever produced. The latter was her great dramatist. He also attained high eminence in the lyric and ballad: Göthe was not only Germany's greatest poet, but the most eminent character in modern literature. His early productions are full of soul, but yet a little mixed with the blood. His riper age, however, atoned for the errors of his youth. The "Truth and Poetry" of his life shows the development of a beautiful mind and a great soul.

England had her early poetry, even before the Norman conquest, and although Gower first appeared above the horizon, yet Chaucer is considered her morning star. He flourished under Edward III. His Canterbury Tales, though doubtless suggested by the Decameron, display great originality and astonishing power. He possessed great invention, but his fancy—according to the definition of the term given in the beginning of our discourse—was not of the highest order. Spenser, who was the next great English poet in the order of time, possessed more fancy, still adhering to our definition, than any poet that ever lived. His imagination—that is, the constructive power—was not so good, for his fancy ran riot with the judgment. He produced more flowers than fruit. Dryden did much to establish the English language, but he can not stand in the highest poetical class; in him the critic was stronger than the poet. Pope was the most philo-

sophical of poets, and yet the most artificial in his style. Butler and Swift may be mentioned together, as wits, not as poets; though Swift was far the greater man. Gray and Collins have furnished us the most finished models of English verse. But when shall we stop? I have not mentioned Shakespeare nor Milton. Why? I would not stop to talk of the sun's brightness, nor of the beauty of the stars; these are seen by all. But what shall I say of poor, rich, wise, foolish, good, bad, erring Burns? Nothing, but that he was the rarest genius ever born—not the greatest. "O, rare Rob Burns," were a more appropriate epitaph than "O, rare Ben Jonson." Byron's poetry was bred in the passions; there is too much blood in it; it is too full of "wine, woman, and war," instead of soul, love, and patriotism. Wordsworth is a very antipode of Byron; his poetry is as deep, placid, and passionless, as his own lake Winandermere. Alexander Smith and Gerald Massie were but meteors of the moment—spoiled by the favor of the critics. Whether the present laureate—Tennyson—is a comet or a fixed star, or, if a star, of what magnitude, is yet to be determined. Morris, with his *Earthly Paradise*, is little more than nebula. Swinburne is a great orb, still aberrant in the poetical sky, but which, if it finds its true orbit, will become a great light. But we can not mention all the poets of England which deserve attention.

America has shown much poetical genius, and produced much good poetry with a great deal of bad. Neither Greece, Rome, England, France, nor Spain, nor any other race, or people, or nation, on earth, at

her national age, had a single poet. But Columbia leaped from the mother country, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, at once into the full panoply of power. We have but one fixed star in poetry—Bryant—who, though not of the greatest magnitude, nor of the very brightest ray, has risen high above the horizon. Willis wrote much, but never got above mere prettiness. Morris wrote some songs, fashionable in their day. Saxe is no poet at all, but a wit of the first water. Halleck has written most excellent things. Whittier writes for the million; he is a good poet, but not a great one. Longfellow is a poet of the highest culture, but not of the greatest genius. The translation of Göthe's *Faust*, by Bayard Taylor, is the best in the English language; in his own poetry he gives us the true American relish. We have many more poets worthy of notice, but we are discoursing of poetry rather than of poets, and must pass on. So little attention will the scope of my discourse allow me to pay to the different branches of my subject, that I feel like one who had been hastening through a beautiful garden so rapidly as not to be able even to look at the separate flowers.

We may now notice a few of the general principles which lie at the foundation of all art. Form and relation govern architecture—form of the whole and the relation of the parts. As we have remarked, there is no prototype in nature for architecture. The art consists in building from inorganic matter, structures beautiful in form, majestic in size, and grand in effect. Form and proportion are the objects to be obtained in sculpture; but this art is confined to organic prototypes in nature. No form is fit for sculp-

ture unless it has once lived. Painting must represent form in superficies, and *apparent* form in solids. This is done by light and shade, or, in other words, by the *quantity* of light reflected from the different parts of the object, as the light and shade would appear in nature. Color is a great beautifier, but it is not indispensable to represent form. Light and shade are simply the various degrees of light which occur between black and white. Neither black nor white, philosophically speaking, is a color. White is the entire light, and black the entire absence of light. If every thing in nature, above, below, and around us, were black, we could see nothing. We do not see black at all; it is defined negatively by what surrounds it. Light or shade therefore represents merely the *quantity* of light, while color represents its *quality*. It seems strange that form should be an essential in music—a thing which seems to have no more definitude than flowing water—yet nothing is more true. An unfinished piece of music is as defective as a broken statue. An artistic piece of music must have its beginning and ending, its parts and members, without which it would afford no more pleasure than a picture or a statue with the absence of some essential limb or feature. It is true that mere musical tone, without regard to any arrangement into a regular piece of music, is pleasing. So are random colors, flashing here and there; or curves, scrolls, and various figures; or separate thoughts, similes, or sentiments; but in neither instance do they represent works of art—they are merely the elements of art, out of which works of art are wrought. They touch emotions, but do not represent thought. Every tone



in a piece of music must bear a certain relation to its key-note. To give the analysis of the musical scale would lead us too far from our subject. Suffice it to say that it has what is called its tonic, or key-note, to which every other note and chord must have a certain relation, which can not be departed from without introducing discord and confusion, and the musician's ear will trace this key-note throughout the most intricate and rapid piece of music, though it may have a score of different parts, and be performed by a hundred different instruments. This key-note may be changed to any other note in the scale by changing this relation, which is done on instruments by means of flats and sharps, and in the human voice by its own natural adaptation. And every piece of music must conclude and repose on the key-note. If it did not, it would leave the ear in waiting for something more, and the soul in suspense and unsatisfied, which would be as unnatural to the sense of the beautiful, as to represent a picture to the eye in a distorted shape, or a statue in a leaning or uneasy position.

Although poetry is unshackled by science, and its elements are everywhere, yet a poem must have its form as well as any other work of art. The image represented must be finished. Every piece of poetry, whether epic, dramatic, lyric, pastoral, or elegiac, must have its leading thought—which should be grand, bright, passionate, emotional—to which every other thought in the piece is subordinated. Because poetry is purely ideal, and not material, it does not follow that it has no form; for an idea has its form, proportions, and symmetry, as well as a material substance. Indeed, every material thing is but

an ideal expressed in matter. Everything must exist in idea before it takes a material form, and the ideal world is no less real than the actual. We might suppose, without impiety, we hope, that the universe existed in the mind of Deity before He spoke it into being. Man can form nothing in the world of matter, until the object first has its prototype in his mind. Indeed, the ideal world is the true world; it is the material world that is stubborn and distorted. The imagination is not like the axe, chisel, or brush; it finds no such stubborn stuff as wood, marble, or canvas, to work upon—all is plastic, and everything yields to its power. In every true poem all the minor ideas and images should be subservient to the grand idea or image which completes its form, as all the parts of a picture or the members of a statue go to complete the image, and without which it would not please; nor would a poem please, however beautiful and bright its parts might be, unless they all went to complete the grand idea or image in the mind. It is not fine thoughts, nor beautiful images alone, that make a work of art. How many grand poems have rough and unpolished lines; and how many poems, worthless as productions, have beautiful and finished parts? How many noble statues are roughly sculptured—that of Praxiteles which won the prize, affords an example—and how many polished ones are worthless? How many grand designs in painting are poorly finished, while others, failing in this, though delicately handled, fail as works of art? And so in architecture—it were vain to bring the marble, hew the blocks, turn the columns, form the arches, curve the architraves, and mold the cornice, unless each was

fitted to its place, and the edifice erected. Thus we see that form lies at the foundation of all the arts.

Taste is the faculty by which we estimate the fine arts. It is sometimes called a finer judgment, but, we think, incorrectly. Judgment is the faculty by which we ascertain the unknown by the known; while in taste there is nothing known or settled, yet, by taking the voice of the human race, a standard is approximated. Taste is not an elegant word as applied to art or belles-lettres, but our language affords no other which expresses the same meaning. It is derived figuratively from the organ of taste in the mouth, popularly, but erroneously, supposed to be the palate; and, of course, must be variable in its meaning to different persons, as individual tastes differ. The word, in its original meaning, is but little more refined than the word *appetite*, which has many, various, and uncertain meanings. The appetites of barbarians—it can scarcely be said that they have any tastes—are almost as uniform as those of the brute creation. In the lowest condition of the human race, man feeds on the uncooked food of nature, whether fruit or flesh; in the highest state of civilization, he has almost lost his original appetites by the artificial preparation of his food. So, in the rude, uncultivated mind, the natural tastes are all for physical action, force, daring, danger, bloodshed, and destruction; while in proportion as man becomes civilized and refined, his appetites are subdued by his tastes, and his passions softened into emotions, and thus his mind and heart are gradually prepared for the appreciation of art; and it will be found, as a rule, that persons of the same degree of culture and refinement, whether

it be high or low, will have essentially the same tastes. And thus it is that the relish of the mind and heart for the beautiful is called, not inappropriately, taste. As taste is ever variable, continually changing in nations from barbarism to civilization, and in individuals from the rude to the cultivated condition, and as criticism is founded on taste, it is not likely to ever become an established art—much less a science—in estimating works of art or belles-lettres. But criticism upon works referable to the understanding, instead of the imagination—to truth, instead of beauty—has solid ground to stand upon, and may become a science as fixed as any other, except those which rest in the abstract. Critics of art and belles-lettres hold a high, delicate, and responsible office; yet “fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” They are too apt to represent a school or a period—the great Ruskin was not wholly free from fractional defects—and sometimes nothing more than a faction, a clique, a person, or an occasion. They are seldom fully capable, and not always wholly honest; and much of their criticism is simply puerile. When Horace warned us not to put a horse’s head on a man’s body, he told us nothing but what children know. Art teaches criticism, not criticism art. If all the tastes of the human family were blended and refined by culture, the result would be the standard; and when we find a critic who in himself represents humanity, he will be able and worthy to judge of the beautiful.

The comparative merits of the fine arts may now properly claim our attention a short time, though to give preference between sisters, when all are so beautiful, seems almost invidious. Architecture is capa-

ble of producing the grandest effects, but it is confined to place. Specimens of this noble art can not be transported to different countries and exhibited to the eyes of whole nations. But few, comparatively, can see them, and there are but few specimens in existence. The Pyramids, St. Peter's, St. Paul's, the Cathedral, must remain forever where they are. They cost millions upon millions, and required ages upon ages to erect them; and their duplicates can not be produced, save at the same cost in expense and time required for the originals. These reasons must forever confine architecture to narrow limits, but within those limits no art is so grand. The effect of sculpture is more delicate and definite in its expression. When we gaze upon a work of architecture, we scarcely know what it is that affects us; but if we look upon a statue, we see the beautiful at once. And the specimens of sculpture are far more numerous than those of architecture, and may be removed from place to place without serious inconvenience. Hundreds may see the Apollo, the Venus, the Psyche, and the Slave, to where one can view the Pyramids, the dome of St. Peter's, the steeple of St. Paul's, or the spires at Milan. If sculpture is less grand than architecture, its effects are far wider and more pleasing. Painting produces the most intense effects of any of the arts. To be unexpectedly ushered into a gallery of paintings would startle the soul at once. The most intense passion, even to agony, may be portrayed in painting. Sculpture may not do this—it would be mere distortion; yet sculpture expresses the gentle emotions with fine effect. We associate a piece of sculpture with the past—with

something hallowed, something that reposes—while painting brings the past to the present, representing life and animation, as if they were capable of action. Painting may represent the form and color of every object in nature, while sculpture is confined to form alone, and to types of beings that have lived. The subjects proper for the pencil are far more numerous than those suitable for the chisel, and copies may be taken with far greater ease, and, if we include engraving, may be multiplied to any number. Painting is not only more intense in its effects, but it has a wider range, and is properly entitled to a higher rank than sculpture. Music is peculiar in its effects. It tells no story, and expresses no definite thought, but fills the soul with emotion. In this it is quite similar in its effects to architecture. It is also sometimes capable of arousing passion, particularly with the power of association. Architecture, sculpture, and painting address themselves to the sight; music appeals to another sense. It finds the heart by many avenues inaccessible to the other arts. Other arts are fixed in form; music is forever flowing like a beautiful thing in nature; and yet, too, it has its form in which it must ultimately repose. It has neither height, shape, size, nor material, and is the sweetest and purest of all the arts. It is molten sentiment and liquid poetry. No place is made worse for its presence; it can not be degraded. Bad associations may accompany it, but, of itself, it never leads to wrong. All the arts, except music and architecture, may be used for vicious ends; these may not. In this they have a superiority over all the others. Nothing is more fleeting than music; yet if

it is ever going, it is ever coming, too, and thus may ever be present. It is the soul of art without its body. All the arts reach the soul, but music is the soul itself. It is the only art that we attribute to the angels.

Poetry possesses many advantages over all the other arts. While architecture is confined to place, sculpture and painting to single moments of time, and music to mere emotion, poetry has all places, all times, all emotions, all passions, all thoughts, all subjects, all things, which can be represented to the human mind. Its productions may be multiplied without limit; and they reach the college, palace, cottage, cabin, and the hut. The other arts address the external senses; poetry addresses the mind alone. It reaches the senses through the mind, while the other arts reach the mind through the senses; and all, except poetry and music, are embodied in matter. Poetry includes all the powers of the other arts, and if it could not be degraded to improper purposes, would be all that the purest soul on earth could wish.

But the object of all the fine arts is the same—namely, to please the sense of the beautiful in our nature—although each effects the end by different means; and while we think their comparative merits stand in the order named, we should nevertheless love and cherish them all, for each has some peculiar excellence which the others never can supply.

As nature, in all its stupendous greatness and infinite variety, is composed of a very few elements, so art, in all its beauty and variety, is formed by a very few principles. Simply the line and curve will account for every shape in architecture or sculpture;

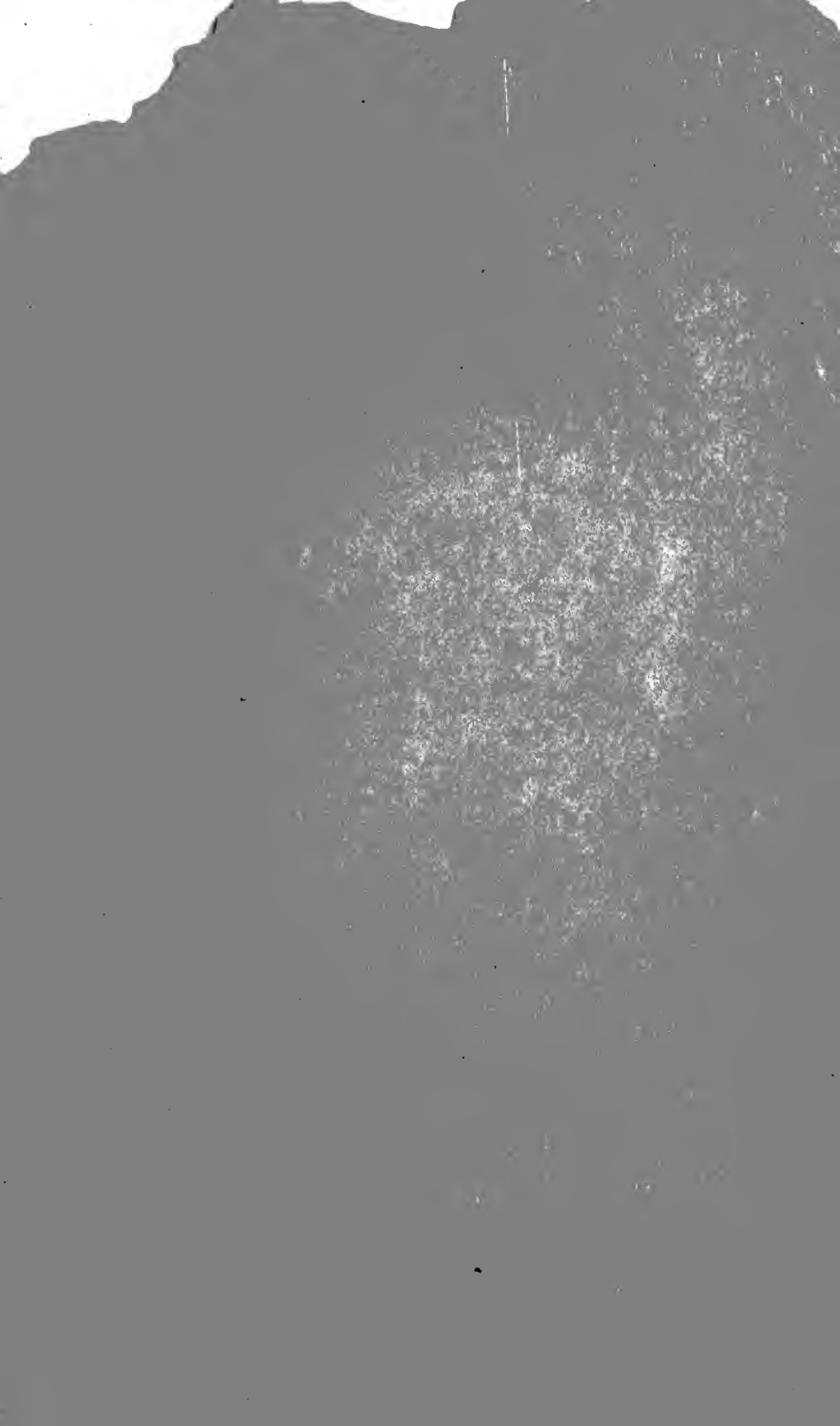
and in painting every material object in the universe can be represented by only three colors and their combinations. Mankind has been singing on the musical scale, which contains but seven sounds, ever since the creation, and the variety is still exhaustless; and with a few letters, not exceeding eleven vowel sounds, perhaps, in all the languages—for the consonants are nothing but the vowels with a peculiar beginning or termination—every possible thought within the range of intellect, and every object or image in the ideal or material world, may be represented by poetry. How few the principles, how endless the variety, how vast the domain of art! And nature herself, in all her works, is but the Art of God. The heavens are His architecture; His statuary is man, formed in His own image. His painting is on the earth and in the sky; the harmony of the rolling spheres is His music; and His poetry is universal and eternal praise.

The national importance of the arts is plainly seen throughout all the nations we have thus incidentally noticed. How much more we know of Greece and Rome than we do of the Eastern nations, or even of Egypt, whence they drew so much of their learning. This is attributable to the state of the arts in these two celebrated nations. They have governed the world during many centuries, not by their arms, nor so much by their laws, but by their arts. What would Greece and Rome have been at this day without their architecture, sculpture, and poetry? Nothing. In what, except in these and eloquence, were they superior to other ancient nations? Nothing. It is time for America to assume a higher rank than



her present position in the most enduring of human things—the arts. Our hills and valleys teem with genius, and our country with subjects. Our land and its history invite the pencil, and our heroes, statesmen, philosophers, artists, and poets the chisel. The glorious deeds of our fathers are worthy of the American harp. We have a new continent, and we are a new people, making the last experiment of free government that ever will be tried—for there are no more continents to discover; and it becomes us not only to be free in arms, but free in thought, and free in art, and independent in all. We have asserted our national and personal liberty, but this alone does not satisfy the soul. We are citizens of the Republic of America—that secures our rights; let us become citizens of the Republic of Letters—that will elevate our minds; and let us be lovers of art—that will ennoble our nature. These sacred privileges and high attainments aid one another; and without their mutual support, America can never fulfill her mission amongst the nations of the earth.











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